

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MORES

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aristocracy to other classes. Such influences are unspoken, unconscious, unintentional. If we admit that it is possible and right for some to undertake to mold the mores of others, of set purpose, we see that the limits within which any such effort can succeed are very narrow, and the methods by which it can operate are strictly defined. The favorite methods of our time are legislation and preaching. These methods fail because they do not affect ritual, and because they always aim at great results in a short time. Above all, we can judge of the amount of serious attention which is due to plans for "reorganizing society" to get rid of alleged errors and inconveniences in it. We might as well plan to reorganize our globe by redistributing the elements in it.

**100.** Dissent from the mores; group orthodoxy. Since it appears that the old mores are mischievous if they last beyond the duration of the conditions and needs to which they were adapted, and that constant, gradual, smooth, and easy readjustment is the course of things which is conducive to healthful life, it follows that free and rational criticism of traditional mores is essential to societal welfare. We have seen that the inherited mores exert a coercion on every one born in the group. It follows that only the greatest and best can react against the mores so as to modify them. It is by no means to be inferred that every one who sets himself at war with the traditional mores is a hero of social correction and amelioration. The trained reason and conscience never have heavier tasks laid upon them than where questions of conformity to, or dissent from, the mores are raised. It is by the dissent and free judgment of the best

reason and  
conscience that the mores win flexibility and  
automatic readjust-  
ment. Dissent is always unpopular in the group.  
Groups form  
standards of orthodoxy as to the " principles "  
which each mem-  
ber must profess and the ritual which each must  
practice. Dis-  
sent seems to imply a claim of superiority. It evokes  
hatred and  
persecution. Dissenters are rebels, traitors, and  
heretics. We  
see this in all kinds of subgroups. Noble and  
patrician classes,  
merchants, artisans, religious and philosophical  
sects, political  
parties, academies and learned societies, punish by  
social penal-  
ties dissent from, or disobedience\* to, their code of  
group conduct.